

FACTS AND FANCIES FOR WOMAN AND THE HOME CIRCLE

THE DAILY
SHORT STORY

The Wedding Knives.

By S. B. MACKLEY.
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THEY were very beautiful—those delicate trifles of the ancient toilet of the seventeenth century bride—the wedding knives of Mistress Anne Hogarth.

Margery Byers took them reverently from their faded green brocade sheaths, and, running her fingers over the elaborately chased blades, and the quaint pearl set handles, handed them to Stephen Palmer. The young physician turned them over curiously.

"So these pretty trinkets were necessary to the bridal toilet a way back in the days of your grandmother's ancestors, Margie?" he remarked. "I don't remember of ever reading of them."

"Why, don't you remember, Steve?" she cried. "Juliet wore them at her wedding when she was in the Friar's cell, and she had them on when she was about to take the sleeping potion."

"What did they symbolize?" asked Palmer.

"They had something to do with severing the knot of love, I believe," answered Margery vaguely. "anyway, whatever they meant, they were beautiful things to wear."

"And you, Margie, I suppose you'll wear these when you're married?" Palmer hesitated a little over his words.

When a girl has a well-defined, relatively simple idea of engaging herself when she gets to the seashore summer resort to a rich man she doesn't care for, but who is going to ask her to marry him—to see unexpected love in the eyes of the man she'd like to marry, even though disapproved of by the relatives, is disconcerting. Margie, turned away and replaced the trinkets in their places before she answered a bit tremulously:

"My wedding day is a long time off, most likely, Steve. I'm not quite twenty, you know."

"I listen, Margie," Stephen tried to keep his voice steady. "I want to tell you something."

"Hurry, Margie," an impatient voice called from the next room. "Are you forgetting we have an engagement this evening?"

"I'm coming, mother," the girl answered. "Come down to the station tomorrow, Steve," she said in hasty goodby, "early. I'll go down a half hour before mother does, and we can talk before the train leaves."

But a man in a factory got himself cut up badly the next day an hour before Margery's train was to leave, and Palmer was called to hold life in him. There was not even time for telephoning Margery, and the letter of explanation he sent her was returned to him unopened.

When three weeks later Margery's engagement to Elmer Troxell was announced Stephen worked so many extra hours at the hospital that the head surgeon protested.

In September the Byers family returned, and Palmer could not escape the accounts of the wedding that was to be one of the city's social events. A few days before the wedding, unable to deny himself the uncertain unhappiness of trying to catch a glimpse of the bride-to-be, he found himself passing the Byers house. As he went by, driving at a snail's pace, he heard frightened screams from within. He leaped from his car. As he ran up the walk a terrified maid thrust open the door.

"Oh, Dr. Palmer!" she cried, recognizing him, "come in, quick!"

Another one of the maids had fallen carrying a tray of glasses, and had cut her wrist. She was shrieking in fear and clinging to Margery, who with a pencil and a handkerchief was twisting a tourniquet about the wounded arm, while the blood spattered her lovely white dress.

"Come away, Margery," frowned a heavy browed man in a white serge costume, standing at a safe distance from the maid, as Palmer came toward, "and let the man attend to her. It's his business—besides you're getting your frock spoiled, and we were ready for our drive."

Margery shook off his hand. "Go away, Elmer!"—Palmer detected a note of dislike in her tone—"you are in Dr. Palmer's way. Never mind the drive. I shall stay with Sophie."

As Troxell sulkily left the room his foot touched something lying on the rug, something that tinkled, as with a murmur of disgust he shoved it aside. The next morning when Palmer returned to the house to attend the injured maid he found her crying.

"I'm not scared for myself, it's Miss Margie I'm worried about," she told him. "He—that man ain't fit for her nor anybody else. Miss Margie told him yesterday she was going to wear her great grandmother's wedding knives at her wedding, and he got awfully mad—asked her how she would look standing up there in her bridal robes, before all his friends with those absurd things dangling at her belt, like a housekeeper's keys! And he threw them on the floor, and when I came in with the tray I stumbled over them and fell and cut my arm."

Palmer paled as he listened, and though he made no comment he had to set his teeth to keep the words that came in his mind.

Two days later Palmer read the following paragraph in the evening paper:

"Troxell Neglects to Get License," ran the headline. "After being supposedly joined in matrimony at the most elaborate society wedding of the year at noon today, with both Rev. Robert Clinton and Bishop Phelps officiating, Miss Margery Byers and Elmer Troxell were informed by County Clerk Vail in the most matter-of-fact way that they were not married at all. They had been married without a license."

The paper further stated that the couple had left Miss Byers' residence at the reception, when the vital error was discovered. A messenger

CONFESSIONS OF A WAR PRIDE

CHAPTER
SIXTY-SEVENTH

I Am to Quote Mother Goose Rhythms, as Code Messages.

Thousands of lives may depend upon your success, my dear," said Daddy Lorimer as he took my arm and led me to his favorite corner of the sun room. "Your trip has to do with our chemicals, of course. We're up against rotten luck with this shipment. We sent a cargo east, but we found a bomb in the hold of our boat. We moved the ship to a port fifty miles away, and she was sunk at the dock. Now we've got a new ship at a new point of departure. It's a long way from New York, my dear—you'd better not know where. We don't want to trust the new plan to wire, phone or mail. But, if you can carry my message to the right party, that blamed juice will be shipped aboard and the ship will make her get-away—and maybe I can get a night's sleep before long."

"Not marry him at all!" he echoed.

"No! Father, mother, everybody, thought it would be so fine for me, I agreed to marry him. I never loved him, but that day he quarreled with me over wearing great-grandmother's wedding knives at my wedding (the day Sophie cut her arm) I knew I hated him. But I thought it was too late then. They talked to me until I was nearly crazy this afternoon when I told them my eyes were opened and I was thankful the license was forgotten. They said it would be a scandal to the family if I didn't marry him now, and they've set the hour for 8 in the morning."

"Margie," the young man's lips were white, "did you send back my letter that I wrote to explain why I didn't come to the train the day you went to Bar Harbor?"

"I never received any letter," she faltered. "I looked and looked for it; then I thought you didn't care. Mother—"

"But I did care—I do care—so much I don't dare advise you. I wanted to tell you that day—I wanted to tell you."

She looked up at him and her wet eyes began to shine. "Tell me now, Steve!" she cried softly. "Oh, Steve, it wouldn't be any scandal for you to let me run away with you and marry you tonight would it?"

At 7 o'clock the next morning the justice of the peace, just over the state line, stood before a tall young professional man holding the hand of a pretty girl, clad in a gray traveling suit of French design, and wearing a her belt her great-grandmother's knives, and pronounced a ceremony that was binding and fast.

"Me—go east—to buy frocks in war time? I'd be ashamed, Daddy Lorimer! I'm going to see the committee of the A. B. F. B. Permanent Blind Relief War Fund! Doesn't that sound better?"

"It certainly does, my dear. That's a great idea. And if you don't botch this business, I'll send your war relief check for \$5,000!"

"Daddy, you might just as well make out that check right now. I'll take it along. It will show why I'm going east—if I need proof. When do I start?"

"Day after tomorrow—on No. 6. You will put up at the new hotel—what's its name?—'Victory'. In the afternoon a man will phone and ask you to tea. You will accept. Over the table, he will hand you one of my cards—a made to this—and on it will be scribbled in my handwriting. Where do we go from here?"

"Daddy, you're joking. No! Then what am I to reply to such nonsense?"

"Nothing at all hard to remember, my dear," Daddy chuckled, howling, "as if it were a great joke. 'It's easy; but remember, don't let it. If you don't keep it straight, half a state may go up in dust!'"

"Honestly, I feel sure of myself," I said eagerly. "And the message is—?"

"Mary had a little lamb!"

"I followed Daddy's words with tense interest and, I hoped, with understanding. I asked—"

"Then, it isn't losing the cargo which bothers you so much, Daddy? You want to get it out to sea, where it can't knock up the continent if German spies should spot it?"

"That's the grand idea, my child. By the way, have you been around the office lately?"

"No, daddy. Chrys said she couldn't bother with me this week."

"Chrys it all right," Daddy smiled his approval. "You must not be recognized as a Lorimer employee. If you meet anyone you know on the train—say you are going to New York to buy clothes!"

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